# *Tagore, in America, Seeks Aid for University*

## Says His People Woo Truth "In Life, Not in Textbooks"

INDIA has been represented to the western mind as a land peopled by beggars, a haunt of age-old superstition, and the lasting dwelling place of dense and all-pervading ignorance.

We have with us a beggar from India, Rabindranath Tagore by name, who comes to plead in behalf of the dwellers in his country for the boon of greater opportunity to seek, in the highest dome of thought, Truth.

But he does not come as emissary from a benighted peninsula. He comes to ask of the riches of the West a sufficient part to enable him to spread further an enlightenment of knowledge to his people, who he believes are now the most cultured in the world.

It is a new rôle for Tagore, this part of mendicant. The world's honors have been his without the asking. Money sufficient for all his personal desires in this existence has flowed easily to him. His eminence in literature has been established beyond peradventure. The award of the Nobel prize has settled his place, even in the minds of that ever-present generation of doubters who demand a sign.

He has come, a wise man out of the ancient East, to ask alms and an understanding intellect from the wealthy West. He desires to create a university. He seeks the material aid that masters and scholars may satisfy their physical needs, while their minds range the Infinite for Truth. He hopes for the understanding that the West, too, may in its measure profit by the learning of the East.

America, land of a thousand universities and a hundred thousand schools, can give the famous Indian scholar and poet the material he asks. And America probably will.

But whether America can give him the understanding for which he hopes may be a subject of doubt.

American pride has always swelled at the thought of American liberality in education. The fine buildings of our college towns, the progressive practicality of our modern educators, and the almost universality of our common schools, have always ministered to our feeling of calm assurance of premiership in opportunities for the spread of culture.

But to Rabindranath Tagore knowledge is a thing apart from costly architecture, and cannot be confined within the limits of textbooks. And general culture does not have its basis in accurate memories of the Three R's.

It was like going to another world, the seeing of this Hindu poet. In a narrow, prosaic hotel room an interviewer was permitted to meet him and ask him regarding his ideal for a university. It had been announced that he hoped to extend the limits of his old boys' school, Shantiniketan, "Abode of Peace," an institution he has maintained for thirty years out of his own income.

But a listener to Tagore forgets the limits of time and space and visualizes universities of spheres.

Only in rare moments when he speaks of the alien government which imposes the universities now in India does a listener remember that Tagore is one of a subject people, and that to him the gentle rule of Britain is still the domination of an alien race.

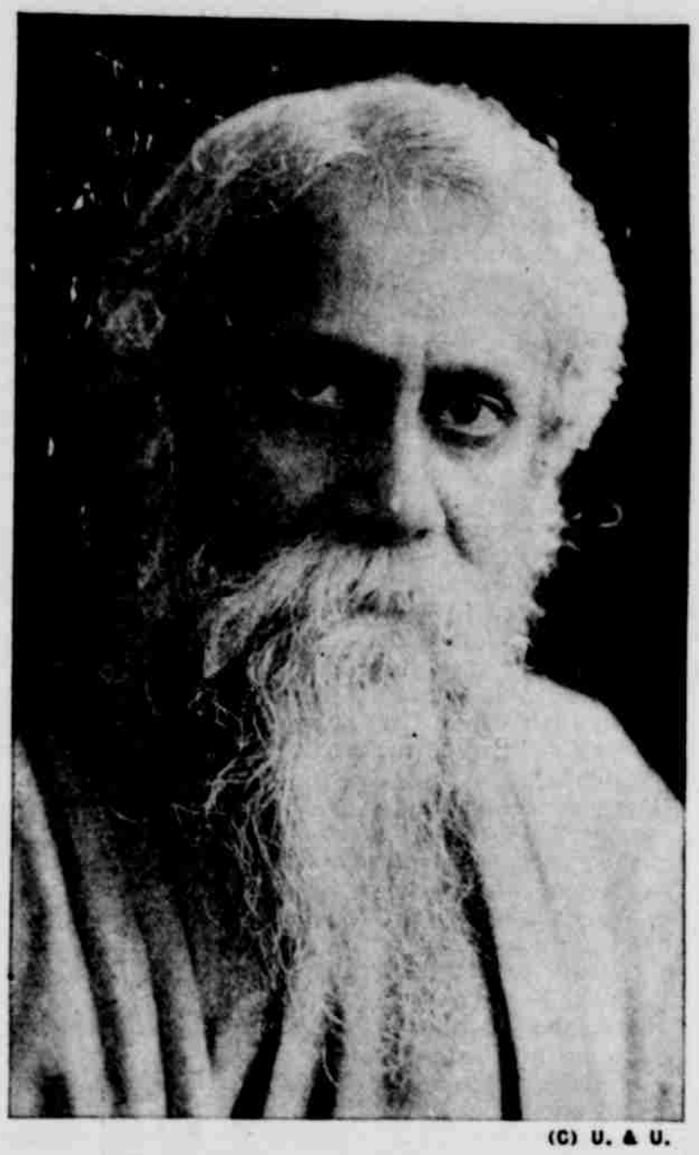
Clad in a flowing gray robe and facing as always, the sun, Tagore is the embodiment of the eastern savant to whom the western world has been introduced in story and poetry. His flowing gray beard and his face, tanned a soft brown during the generations in which his ancestors faced the hot sun of his peninsula, and his black eyes which glow with marvelous softness despite their unmistakable piercing qualities, give an interviewer a sense of unreality.

When Tagore speaks this impression grows. His voice is high and soft, with an almost spirit-like quality. His language flows with rhythmic purity.

Under the spell of his words, it would be a hardened materialist or hidebound creedsman indeed who would not sway to the music of eastern thought. His language is beautiful and the depth of his thought is striking. But somehow a listener, eager to hear his reasoning and pay attention to his knowledge, finds himself succumbing to other influences.

Perhaps it is the timbre of Tagore's voice. Perhaps it is the picture he makes. Perhaps it is the combination of these with his philosophy.

Quotation of the Hindu scholar is attempted only with a preliminary apology because of lack of exactitude of language by which alone his poetic thought may be appreciated fully.



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**SIR RABINDRANATH TAGORE**

Mr. Tagore, he is a knight by the way, was asked to make clear the differences between the university he plans and universities familiar to the American public.

"Some of your western universities," he said, "have followed to some extent the ideas we of the East possess of universities. In Paris, and in Cambridge and in Oxford there have been at different times teachings similar to those in India."

Mr. Tagore then began to speak of university buildings. Frequently he adverted to buildings.

"The buildings in the western universities are fine," he said. "They are beautiful. To them come the scholars from all over the land. And at them they linger, and imbibe the knowledge contained within textbooks, and taught to them by the masters. They are birds in beautiful cages. They linger a few years; then someone opens the cages and they fly away.

"To me, a university is a perpetual thing. There is something dead, something dried, all cut and dried about these universities of the West. It is not the syllabae, the curricula, nor the fine buildings that make a university. There is something more, something growing, something living.

"In our universities in India, the master may pick his scholars. The grammarian may select those who desire to study grammar. The teacher of philosophy may choose those who seek philosophy.

"And these scholars come and sit by his side. It may be in a humble place. The master's wife will cook the meals for his scholars, and the master's home will be their dwelling place. There will be no dollars nor cents connected with their search for Truth.

"The master will unfold his knowledge and the scholars absorb and imbibe his honesty, his truthfulness and his spirit of self-sacrifice. The masters of India are simple men. But they believe they have a responsibility in connection with the knowledge they possess. They believe that if they do not impart that knowledge to others it will depart from them.

"Together then, not in textbooks but in life, master and scholar search for the Truth.

"In this unity of life in which they work and study, I believe, lies the real university, a perpetual and a perpetuating institution."

Mr. Tagore was asked to discuss the condition of the masses of India with respect to general knowledge such as is disseminated in American common schools. In complying with the request, the Hindu scholar seemed completely unconscious of the American feeling of the superiority of American schools. Neither did he seem to realize the belief has long stood unchallenged in this country that the masses in the Indian peninsula dwell in abysmal ignorance.

"Mass education, that is quite a hobby of mine," he said. "In India, I believe, we have greatly the better of you on that score. I do not believe that it is in accurate knowledge of reading and writing that culture necessarily lies.

"In this country, the students come to a fixed place where your fine school buildings are located, and there they receive the knowledge that is contained inside of textbooks."

Mr. Tagore recurred to his phrase of the deadness and dryness of such routine education.

"In my country," he said, "there are trained men, professional men who go from place to place. They go to marriage feasts or other great festivals. Thousands upon thousands of persons gather to hear them. They include the young and the old. They listen with rapt attention while these masters recite with action and with humor the living, vivid stories of our literature. They recite the great epics, the Mahabarata and the Puranas, and the tales of mythology. And as they recite them, give them life.

"The people become acquainted with the great operas, the religious lyrics and the chorus songs, which inculcate the great truths.

"It is like irrigation, this culture of ours, irrigation that brings the waters to every man's door. The people imbibe the great truths of philosophy, and they learn the poetry of life."

Mr. Tagore hopes that his university may develop into an institution to which westerners may come and learn something of the philosophy and intellectual treasure of his people. He hopes, too, that some of the scientific knowledge of the West may be placed at the disposal of the youth in his country.

Tagore will probably remain in America during the winter months. He plans a trip through the southern states, which he says he was not privileged to visit when he was in the United States previously.

# *Christmas in the Pueblos of the Aborigines*

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to the ankles are white buckskin affairs like bootlegs, and on the feet are red moccasins embroidered with serpents' heads. A bunch of feathers dyed in red and blue are held in one hand, and a showy silk handkerchief in the other. Heavy earrings, a score of bracelets and a row of turquoise and shell necklaces complete the toilet.

The men face the women, a strump on the drums, and the dancing begins. The chorus by the choir starts in a low gutteral. The feet of all the dancers move slowly in unison with the music. Arms and hands bearing the feathers wave aloft to the movement of feet. Gradually the chorus rises, the feet move faster and the hands full of feathers wave more swiftly. The chorus becomes a wild allegro. The men are gyrating so fast that one can scarcely distinguish their features, while their black hair stands out tangent to their heads. The women's feet are moving so fast that one wonders if they will ever stop. The native onlookers' ululations grow louder and more rapid, and the music is drowned.

Truly, he who is not moved at this scene is most phlegmatic. The adobe white walls a yard thick, set with deep-recessed windows and many crude pictures in oil, representing scenes in Christ's life; the pitiful little altars at the further end, adorned with candles, huge bunches or bouquets of paper flowers, and a wreath of tinsel and several wooden crosses; the logs above all, yellow with great age, that support the roof; the perspiring, painted Indian men, whirling about as if in wild delirium; the dark-visaged women, in garments of livid colors and with now disheveled hair over their faces, moving about with upraised hands, waving feathers and silk handkerchiefs in perfect time to the rapid chorus; the several hundred black-eyed, excited, shouting onlookers, from wrinkled and bent old men to children, clad in blankets and strange garments of barbaric fancy; the dozens of young women, among the mass of spectators, who hold lighted candles above their swart faces and ebony hair, while they scream with ecstatic excitement, all form a scene that the most indifferent can never forget in a century of life. The room resounds with the shouts of the Indians, and the altar shakes with the reverberations and the stamping of feet. For three and four hours this strange, impressive ceremony continues. At exactly midnight, the bells on the roof are jangled vigorously. At a signal the chorus closes, and the dancers, running with tiny streams of perspiration and mingled colors, cease. A sudden hush comes over all. In a few minutes the assemblage participates in the celebration of the mass by the lenient priest.

The Indians of the Laguna pueblo know full well the cheer of Christmas time. The women dress in the most striking combinations of blue, green, red and black and may be seen bearing a carefully prepared pie to the home of a friend. There is a wealth of black cake throughout the village and bread stuff, seasoned with chili, is on every table. The old padre is fairly submerged by gifts of Indian culinary. Wine is a mocker here in the land of the red man, also. A Laguna decoction, squeezed from the zinfandel grape and toned by an ingredient from the cactus, will set any man's blood tingling. Every night in the holiday week there are several hundred shining eyes in the ancient pueblo; but the drink acts as a promoter of pure and simple geniality, seldom combativeness.

Every one in Laguna visits in the holiday week. The more sociable will sit up all night smoking, eating and drinking, especially drinking. Thus the gayety proceeds. It reaches its culmination on New Year's Day. There is a feast in every domicile for which ample preparation has been made. The next day comes the reaction; the holidays are over and Laguna takes on its customary air of quiet and rest, to be broken only by the advent of Easter and its attendant ceremonies. The men duly seek the sunniest spots outside their little homes, and basking in the genial dry sunshine, slowly roll their cigarets of tobacco and corn husks and dream the days away. The good housewives put away their finery and go about their household duties, and the pueblo sleepily awaits the coming of spring when there is work for all in the planting of the year's harvest.